

PREVENTION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN ELECTION SUPERVISORY ENVIRONMENTS: PROBLEMS, CHALLENGES, AND STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a critical issue that undermines the integrity of elections and the participation of women in democratic processes. This study aims to identify the problems, challenges, and strategies for preventing GBV in the context of election oversight institutions. Using a qualitative research method with a literature review approach, the study reveals that GBV manifests in various forms, including sexual harassment, verbal intimidation, and gender discrimination. Key challenges include entrenched patriarchal norms, the underrepresentation of women in election oversight leadership, and insufficient policies and reporting mechanisms to address the issue. Mitigation strategies emphasize strengthening regulations, implementing gender-sensitive recruitment processes, and providing GBV education to enhance awareness and commitment among stakeholders. These measures aim to create a safe, inclusive, and violence-free work environment, ensuring professional and integrity-driven election monitoring practices.

Keywords: *Election Oversight, Gender-Based Violence, Women's Participation*

INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a pervasive and deeply concerning issue that manifests across various sectors, including the electoral process. Globally, women encounter numerous barriers to political participation, which extend to their involvement in electoral management bodies. GBV not only exacerbates existing inequalities but also acts as a formidable barrier, discouraging women and other vulnerable groups from actively participating in political and electoral activities. A 2022 study by International IDEA highlights

the stark reality of gender disparity in leadership within electoral management bodies, revealing that only 22% of these institutions worldwide are led by women. The situation is even more pronounced in Asia, where the representation of women in such leadership roles drops to a mere 10% (Waugh, 2024). These figures underscore the urgent need for concerted efforts to address both GBV and the structural inequalities that hinder women's full participation in the electoral process.

Gender refers to the observable differences in roles, behaviors, and expectations attributed to men and women based on societal values and norms. It is a term used to describe the social and cultural distinctions between the sexes, rather than purely biological differences. Gender encompasses a range of culturally constructed attributes, norms, and behaviors that societies associate with masculinity and femininity. These constructs often shape individuals' identities, roles, and interactions within a community (Narwoko & Suyatno, 2010). Importantly, gender is not static; it evolves over time and varies across different cultures, reflecting the diversity of societal beliefs and practices about what it means to be male, female, or another gender.

Violence against women is considered a violation of women's fundamental rights worldwide. Gender-based violence, which predominantly affects women, includes verbal abuse, physical violence, and the infringement of their basic rights. To address this issue, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was established as an international instrument to protect women's rights. CEDAW emphasizes that violence, intimidation, and fear experienced by women serve as significant barriers to their active participation in social life (Purwanti, 2020). Many scholars have formulated concepts of violence; however, in general, violence can be understood as the abuse of power, inequality, and domination of one party over another. The misuse of power is often employed to coerce or deceive others, ultimately undermining integrity and eroding the trust of those subjected to such abuse.

According to Fakhri (Mansour, 2001), gender refers to behavioral differences between men and women that are socially constructed, rather than

being innate or divinely ordained. These differences are created by humans, both men and women, through prolonged social and cultural processes. Gender inequality can manifest in various forms, such as marginalization or processes that lead to economic impoverishment; subordination, which assumes that women are insignificant in political decision-making; negative stereotyping or labeling; violence; and heavier and longer workloads. The marginalization of women is one of the most prevalent forms of gender inequality, often resulting in poverty. This condition affects not only women but also men, although women are more frequently the victims. Such impoverishment can be caused by factors such as government policies, religious interpretations, traditions, customs, or even assumptions in scientific discourse. Marginalization of women occurs not only in the workplace but also within households, communities, cultures, and even nations. Within households, discrimination frequently arises between male and female family members. Traditional customs and religious interpretations often reinforce these forms of marginalization, creating deeply rooted structures of injustice that are difficult to change.

Statistics indicate that female election supervisors are more vulnerable to violence compared to their male counterparts. The types of violence they face vary, ranging from sexual harassment and verbal threats to physical intimidation. This condition not only hinders their performance but also undermines the integrity of elections and reduces women's participation in democratic processes. During the 2017–2022 period, the Honorary Council of Election Organizer (DKPP) handled 25 cases of sexual violence, resulting in 21 decisions for permanent dismissal and 4 severe reprimands. In 2022–2023, DKPP dealt with 4 cases, leading to 3 permanent dismissals and 1 final severe reprimand. However, in 2023, there was a significant increase, with 54 reports of indecent acts and sexual harassment by election organizers submitted to DKPP (Itsaini & Alexander, 2024).

In Indonesia, numerous studies have examined violence in elections, both physical and non-physical. However, most of these studies have not linked electoral violence with a gender perspective and often overlook gender

dimensions, such as violence, intimidation, and harassment in elections rooted in gender discrimination (Wildianti & Ramadhana, 2024). Therefore, a comprehensive strategy is necessary to prevent and address GBV within the election monitoring environment. Election supervisors play a crucial role in ensuring that elections are conducted fairly and transparently. Their responsibilities include overseeing the electoral process and reporting any violations. However, they often face various risks, including GBV, particularly female supervisors. Such violence can severely impact their performance, undermine the integrity of elections, and reduce women's participation in politics and democratic processes.

The prevention of GBV within election monitoring environments is a critical issue requiring serious attention. What effective measures can be implemented to prevent GBV in this context. Additionally, what are the primary issues that frequently arise, and what challenges must be addressed to create a safe, inclusive, and discrimination-free workplace. Finally, what strategies are most relevant and effective to ensure that the election monitoring process is conducted without any form of violence or gender-based discrimination.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative method with a literature review approach. According to Creswell (Creswell, 2014), this approach aims to seek relevant theoretical references to understand the phenomena or issues under investigation. Sources of references include books, journals, research articles, focus group discussions (FGDs), reports, or information available online. The qualitative research approach is carried out by capturing GBV phenomena occurring within election monitoring environments and cases brought to court or addressed in DKPP rulings. Descriptive qualitative analysis in this study involves linking facts and data through a critical review of relevant literature. This method is considered appropriate as it enables an in-depth analysis of violence phenomena, their causes, and their impacts on gender-based violence within the election monitoring environment. Through this approach, the study aims to provide a contextual and

comprehensive interpretation of the data obtained, thereby forming a robust basis for formulating relevant, evidence-based strategies or recommendations.

In the sociological context, violence against women occurs within the process of interaction, resulting in an imbalance of bargaining positions in terms of roles or status. Such conditions are embedded within the mechanisms of societal social structures (Putri, 2021). The theory of violence refers to physical acts that cause injury, disability, pain, or suffering to others, involving elements of coercion, animosity, or lack of the victim's consent. According to Thomas Santoso (Santoso, 2002), the theory of violence is categorized into three main groups. First, The Theory of Violence as Acts by Individual or Group Actors, which posits that violence may be influenced by inherent factors or sociological aspects, including physical acts such as assault or verbal acts like offensive language. Collective violence involves joint actions by several individuals or groups. Second, The Theory of Structural Violence, which argues that violence arises from larger social systems or institutions, such as state apparatuses, creating systemic inequalities. Third, The Theory of Violence as the Link Between Actors and Structure, which views conflict as an inherent part of societal life, emerging from interactions between individuals and social systems. These three theories provide a comprehensive understanding of violence from individual, collective, and structural perspectives.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Election supervisors often face high-risk situations where violence can occur in physical, verbal, or psychological forms. Such violence is frequently triggered by their gender and is inherently discriminatory, including sexual harassment, threats, or intimidation. These conditions highlight the need for effective protection strategies to prevent and address GBV within the election monitoring environment. This study explores GBV in the context of election supervisors and examines measures that can be implemented to protect them, including supportive policies, training, the utilization of technology, and increased public awareness.

The Problem of Gender-Based Violence in the Election Supervisory Environment

DKPP plays a strategic role in ensuring that elections are conducted fairly, transparently, and with integrity. One of the key aspects of DKPP's responsibilities is enforcing the code of ethics among election organizers, including addressing ethical violations related to misconduct. While DKPP's primary focus is on maintaining the integrity and professionalism of election organizers, acts of misconduct committed by election organizers have serious implications for public trust in the democratic process. The following table presents several DKPP rulings related to acts of misconduct. (Pettalolo, 2024) :

Tabel 1. DKPP Decision Regarding Immoral Acts

Decision Number	The Accused
Nomor: 130/DKPP-PKE-VI/2017	Jabal Samallo (Member of Panwas Kab. Seram Bagian Barat)
Nomor: 76/DKPP-PKE-VII/2018	Elfin Eduard Pasaribu (Member of Panwas Kota Pematangsiantar)
Nomor: 327-PKE-DKPP/XII/2019	Kiswan Paputungan (Chairman of Bawaslu Kabupaten Bolaang Mongondow Selatan)
Nomor: 42-PKE-DKPP/IV/2020	Sophia Marlinda Djami (Chairman of KPU Kabupaten Sumba Barat)
Nomor: 54-PKE-DKPP/IV/2020	Muhammad Kholid Asyadulloh (Member of KPU Kota Surabaya)
Nomor: 96-PKE-DKPP/IX/2020	Baharuddin Hafid (Chairman of KPU Kabupaten Jenepono)
Nomor: 185-PKE-DKPP/XII/2020	Wa Ode Lestiana (Staff of PPNPNS Sekeretariat Bawaslu Kabupaten Buton)
Nomor: 12-PKE-DKPP/I/2021	Muh Abdullah (Member of KPU Kabupaten Boyolali)
Nomor: 16-PKE-DKPP/I/2021	Bambang (Member of Bawaslu Kabupaten Parigi Moutong)
Nomor: 101-PKE-DKPP/VIII/2023	Petrus Payong Pati (Member of KPU Kabupaten Lembata)

Nomor: 29-PKE-DKPP/II/2024	Masridah Badwie (Member of Bawaslu Kabupaten Hulu Sungai Selatan)
Nomor: 90-PKE-DKPP/V/2024	Hasyim Asy'ari (Ketua Komisi Pemilihan Umum)
Nomor: 77-PKE-DKPP/V/2024	Saipul Bahri Dalimunthe (Chairman of KPU Kabupaten Labuhanbatu Selatan)
Nomor: 46-PKE-DKPP/III/2024	Mitsu Pardede (Member of Bawaslu Kota Sawahluntho)

Source : DKPP RI, 2024

The DKPP has taken decisive action to uphold the integrity of electoral institutions by imposing permanent dismissal sanctions on chairpersons or members of election organizers found guilty of misconduct. These measures aim to restore public trust in the democratic process and reinforce the accountability of electoral bodies. Within the sphere of election organizers and supervisors, various forms of misconduct—ranging from ethical breaches to violations of legal and moral standards—threaten the credibility and fairness of electoral systems. Such actions, whether direct or indirect, undermine the foundational principles of democracy, highlighting the critical need for strict oversight and enforcement to safeguard the integrity of election management.

One prevalent pattern involves hierarchical relationships between superiors and subordinates, where structural power often creates gender-based inequities. Women as subordinates are particularly vulnerable to harassment or exploitation of power relations by male-dominated superiors, leading to workplace discomfort, psychological stress, or even loss of career opportunities. Another pattern is preferential treatment toward superiors or subordinates, which fosters gender discrimination, such as unjust rewards or excessive punishments, often rooted in gender stereotypes. This reinforces a patriarchal culture that supports male dominance in the workplace. Additionally, the misuse of authority and resources by individuals in positions of power constitutes a significant issue, where women are frequently targeted for sexual harassment, workplace exploitation, or emotional manipulation. These actions reflect social inequities

exacerbated by systems granting excessive power without adequate oversight, thereby creating an environment conducive to violence against women.

Sexual harassment, as defined by DKPP rulings, encompasses various actions deemed violations of the electoral organizers' code of ethics (Pettalolo, 2024). These forms of harassment include behaviors such as calling individuals of the opposite sex late at night without any professional justification or engaging in flirtatious communication at inappropriate hours. Harassment may also take the form of unethical invitations, such as proposing "emotional consolidation" or requesting to be carried or carry another individual. Verbal harassment, unauthorized touching, hugging, or embracing, as well as actions like poking the waist or brushing the thigh under the pretense of removing food crumbs, are also categorized as violations. Furthermore, actions such as demeaning the dignity of women, exploiting power dynamics, and inviting individuals of the opposite sex for outings or coffee outside of work-related purposes are additional examples. More serious actions, such as inviting individuals to hotels, abusing authority to demean subordinates, engaging in extramarital affairs, or having inappropriate relationships, are also identified as breaches of the code of ethics. Misusing official resources for personal gain, making unfulfilled promises, coercing individuals of the opposite sex, and other forms of intimidation further exemplify behaviors that undermine the institution's integrity. These actions not only contravene ethical norms but also create an unsafe and discriminatory work environment.

The data above highlights various forms of sexual harassment that reflect gender-based violence, particularly against women, within the environment of election organizers and supervisors. Actions such as verbal harassment, unauthorized touching, abuse of power, and exploitation of power relations illustrate how gender inequality and patriarchal culture exacerbate the risk of violence against women. In addition to degrading the dignity of women, such behaviors also undermine the integrity of the institution.

Challenges of Preventing Gender-Based Violence in Election Supervisory Environments

The challenges faced by election organizers often create opportunities for gender-based violence, both directly and indirectly. Factors such as their status as state officials, access to adequate facilities, substantial income, and high social standing frequently grant individuals additional power within the workplace. Furthermore, the presence of lower-level supervisors and imbalanced power dynamics exacerbate the risk of abuse of authority (Pettalolo, 2024). These conditions foster situations where GBV may manifest as harassment, intimidation, or discrimination, potentially harming victims and tarnishing the integrity of the electoral management institution. Therefore, strict management and oversight of power relations and social dynamics within the workplace are essential to minimize these risks.

The challenges in mitigating gender-based violence encompass various complex and multidimensional aspects. These challenges stem not only from internal factors, such as the public's limited understanding of gender issues, but also from structural barriers, including policies that inadequately support victim protection, limited resources for case management, and social norms that perpetuate gender inequalities. Furthermore, these challenges are often exacerbated by the lack of awareness and commitment from various stakeholders, including government institutions, non-governmental organizations, and local communities, to actively engage in efforts to mitigate GBV.

According to Alfath (Alfath, 2024), the challenges of mitigating GBV in the context of election organizers encompass various aspects that require serious attention. One major issue is the lack of awareness and understanding of GBV among election organizers, including Bawaslu. As an institution with a strategic role in ensuring fair, transparent, and credible elections, Bawaslu is expected to achieve a minimum representation of 30% women in each region, in accordance with gender equality regulations. However, the realization of this proportion remains uneven, necessitating an evaluation of recruitment, selection, and promotion mechanisms within Bawaslu. This effort aims to ensure equal

opportunities for women, thereby enriching perspectives in the electoral monitoring process and promoting a more inclusive and representative democracy.

One of the key challenges facing election management institutions is the lack of effective and accessible reporting mechanisms for addressing violations within the workplace. This gap persists despite the existence of comprehensive legal frameworks, such as the Law on the Prevention of Sexual Violence and the Ministerial Decree on Manpower (Kepmenaker) Number 88 of 2023. These regulations provide clear guidelines for preventing and addressing sexual violence in professional settings, emphasizing the need for workplaces that prioritize safety, uphold human rights, and actively protect employees from harassment and abuse. Implementing these regulations within election management institutions is essential for fostering a culture of accountability and respect. By addressing these issues, these institutions can create an inclusive, discrimination-free environment that not only ensures professional integrity but also strengthens the credibility and ethical standards of the electoral process.

Additionally, a major challenge lies in the prevalence of patriarchal social norms, which often influence the behavior and mindset of individuals within election supervisor institutions. This patriarchal culture can lead to the marginalization of women, resulting in their voices and needs being overlooked in strategic decision-making processes, including in the prevention of GBV. In some cases, GBV is perceived as a personal or domestic issue rather than an institutional problem requiring serious attention. The representation of women within election supervisor leadership remains a significant issue. Although regulations mandate a minimum representation of 30% women, the implementation of this rule is uneven across regions. This disparity can affect institutional perspectives in addressing GBV. Furthermore, the underrepresentation of women often leads to gender issues being deprioritized in the policies and programs of election supervisor institutions.

Gender-Based Violence Prevention Strategy in Election Supervisory Environment

Addressing GBV requires a comprehensive and integrated approach that encompasses prevention, response, and recovery measures. One key strategy is the strengthening of policies and regulations to foster an inclusive, fair, and equitable democratic process. Gender-sensitive elections aim not only to ensure women's participation as voters but also to provide equal opportunities for women to serve as candidates, supervisors, or organizers (Eddyono, 2024). This approach includes policies that promote women's representation, protection from GBV, and the creation of safe and discrimination-free environments throughout the electoral process. To enhance these efforts, internal policies that firmly address GBV perpetrators are necessary, alongside the implementation of specific Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that include GBV prevention training and transparent reporting mechanisms. Consequently, the work environment for election supervisors can become safer, enabling them to perform their duties effectively while preserving the integrity of elections.

In addition to policies, gender-sensitive recruitment is another strategic step toward creating inclusive and representative institutions. Law Number 7 of 2017 on General Elections mandates the importance of meeting a 30% quota for women's representation in the membership of election organizers at Bawaslu (Patonangi, 2021). This approach goes beyond fulfilling quotas by ensuring a gender-neutral selection process and providing equal access for women at all levels, including leadership positions. The inclusion of women in the selection process, both as candidates and as members of selection teams, is crucial to ensuring diverse perspectives in identifying competent leaders. By adopting the principles of gender equality in recruitment, election monitoring institutions not only strengthen their internal capacity but also demonstrate a commitment to a more inclusive and equitable democracy.

Bawaslu has implemented various measures to support gender equity in elections. Through Perbawaslu No. 4 of 2022, which revised Perbawaslu No. 19 of 2017, Bawaslu mandated a minimum of 30% women's representation at all

levels, including the Panwaslu at the subdistrict level. Bawaslu also enhanced technical recruitment guidelines for election supervisors based on gender equity and is in the process of drafting a Gender-Based Policy blueprint to create a women-friendly work environment. Additionally, Bawaslu continues to advocate for policies that increase women's representation and uphold gender equity principles in elections (Tampomuri & Giyanto, 2024).

Education on GBV is also a key component in creating a safe and inclusive workplace culture. This education aims to raise awareness among election monitoring personnel, both men and women, about various forms of GBV, such as harassment, intimidation, and discrimination, which may occur in the workplace or interactions with external parties. Educational programs should be designed comprehensively, covering the fundamental concepts of gender equality, the impact of GBV on individuals and organizations, as well as preventive and responsive measures. These programs should also include simulations and practical training to identify signs of violence and understand victim-friendly reporting mechanisms. Through continuous education, election monitoring personnel are expected not only to gain sufficient knowledge but also to develop a commitment to preventing and addressing GBV, thereby supporting the professional and equitable execution of election monitoring duties.

The National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) has commended Bawaslu's commitment to integrating efforts to address violence against women, particularly sexual violence, both in election monitoring mechanisms and institutional governance (Yentriyani, 2024). This collaboration aims to create a violence-free environment for women in the 2024 regional elections through four main commitments: enhancing the capacity and education of election organizers and the public, monitoring and reporting cases of gender-based violence, conducting public campaigns to raise awareness of women's political participation and the prevention of violence, and strengthening participatory oversight and policy advocacy.

The resulting guidelines will provide a crucial reference for Bawaslu in its efforts to prevent and address sexual violence within the electoral process. By

establishing clear protocols and preventive measures, these guidelines will contribute to the implementation of elections conducted with integrity and fairness. Furthermore, they will play a vital role in fostering an inclusive and dignified democratic environment, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of gender or background, can participate freely and safely in the democratic process. This initiative underscores Bawaslu's commitment to upholding ethical standards and protecting the rights and dignity of all participants in the electoral system.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study highlights that gender-based violence (GBV) within election oversight bodies is a serious issue affecting the integrity of democracy and women's participation in electoral processes. The identified problems include sexual harassment, abuse of power, and gender discrimination, which are often rooted in patriarchal culture and structural inequalities. Key challenges in mitigating GBV encompass a lack of awareness, limited supportive policies, and inadequate mechanisms for safe and transparent reporting. To address these issues, proposed strategies include strengthening policies and regulations to hold GBV perpetrators accountable, implementing gender-sensitive recruitment processes, and providing comprehensive education to raise awareness and commitment among all stakeholders.

Embracing inclusive practices, implementing robust prevention strategies, and fostering strong collaboration among stakeholders are critical steps toward establishing a secure, discrimination-free workplace within election oversight bodies. These initiatives aim to enable these institutions to carry out their responsibilities with professionalism, integrity, and accountability. By cultivating an environment grounded in inclusivity and ethical conduct, such efforts uphold democratic values and reinforce the credibility of election oversight processes. Additionally, they play a vital role in advancing a more equitable and representative political system—one that accommodates the diverse perspectives and needs of society while ensuring fairness and justice in democratic governance.

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